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DATE 09-26-2018 BY: [REDACTED]

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LEADERSHIP OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
AFTER AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI'S DEATH

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For the information of receiving offices, the Terrorist Research and Analytical Center (TRAC) at FBIHQ is producing a continuing series of short, informative airtels on a variety of topics relating to FBI counterterrorism investigations. This airtel presents information relating to the leadership of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its foreign policies, particularly toward the United States. Also provided is a brief characterization of the various Iranian organizations and groups represented in the United States which are considered capable of conducting terrorist operations. This communication may be duplicated for dissemination to interested FBI supervisors, case Agents, and analytical personnel.

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1 ¹ - Mr. Clarke
1 - Mr. Otto
1 - Mr. Revell
1 - Each Assistant Director-

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SEE NOTE PAGE 6

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Airtel to All SACs and All LEGATS
Re: LEADERSHIP OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
AFTER AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI'S DEATH
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Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the spiritual leader of Iran and the founder of the world's first Islamic Republic died on June 3, 1989, leaving behind a fragmented leadership which had been competing for power as the health of the aged and ailing Ayatollah declined. The Iranian President, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, whose second and final four-year term as president officially expires in October, has been chosen by an 83-member Assembly of Experts, a permanent constitutional body, to temporarily assume the leadership responsibilities of Ayatollah Khomeini. Ayatollah Montazeri, Khomeini's designated heir as Iran's top spiritual leader was ousted in March 1989, reportedly based on his predisposition toward a moderate and lenient application of Islam and its principles.

Initial reports from Iran indicated that President Khamenei was expected to lead a caretaker government during the political turmoil likely to follow the Ayatollah Khomeini's death. However, more recent intelligence information indicates that he may have been one of Ayatollah Khomeini's favorite choices for permanently assuming the spiritual leadership of the Islamic Republic. Reportedly a graduate of the Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow, Khamenei was elected Iran's President in 1981, and has managed to remain in power primarily because of his loyalty and dedication to Ayatollah Khomeini. To secure a more permanent position as Ayatollah Khomeini's successor and as Iran's top spiritual leader, however, Khamenei must now gain the approval of his peers among the leading Shiite fundamentalists in Iran. In so doing, Khamenei rivals President-elect Hojatoleslam Hashemi Rafjsanjani, also the acting commander-in-chief; and Hojatoleslam Ahmad Khomeini, Ayatollah Khomeini's only surviving son. Although these three men are viewed as the most likely contenders to permanently succeed Khomeini, Ayatollah Ali Meshkini, the Assembly's chairman, and Ayatollah Mahdavi-Kani, a former prime minister, are also considered as possible candidates for the position.

Some of these men, like Rafsanjani and Khamenei, have reportedly advocated moderate foreign policies, mainly for the purpose of acquiring help for the ailing post-war economy in Iran. Others, such as Meshkini and Ahmad Khomeini, have been active and instrumental in the recent radical and confrontational anti-Western campaign that has influenced Iran's foreign and domestic policies during the last several months. All of these clerics, however, are considered radical fundamentalists among

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NOTE: The contents of this communication has been coordinated
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Airtel to All SACs and All LEGATS.
Re: LEADERSHIP OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
AFTER AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI'S DEATH


terrorist acts to the Soviet Union and other European countries which may shun relations with Iran should the Islamic Republic openly conduct acts of terrorism.

The following are characterizations of various Iranian organizations and groups operating in the United States which are believed capable of engaging in or supporting terrorist attacks if so directed:


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AFTER AVATOLLAH KHOMEINI'S DEATH


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the Shiite clerics, and have been part of the leadership in a government where few senior elements have changed since the dawn of the Islamic revolution in 1979. While they may at times appear as advocates of opposing policies, these clerics realize that it is only through the unity that they can secure the leadership role of the clergy in Iran during the post-Khomeini era.

As the spiritual leader of the Islamic Revolution, Khomeini's successor will assume the role of "Faqih" (Supreme Jurist), the title assumed by Khomeini and which represented his controversial concept of "Velayat-E-Faqh" which lays the foundation for a theocratic state. According to "Velayat-E-Faqh," which is incorporated in the post revolution constitution, the "Faqih" is the ultimate decision maker in the Islamic Republic, while the clerical class must supervise all the executive, administrative, and planning affairs of the country. It is believed that leading clerics in Iran will ensure that the individual who inherits the position of "Faqih" will be strong enough to secure the clerical class their claim to leadership, and at the same time suppress any adversaries. The final decision concerning the succession issue rests with the Assembly of Experts which has the option of choosing one religious figure or a group of three (3) or five (5) clerics to succeed Ayatollah Khomeini as "Faqih."

Regardless of the Assembly of Expert's choice(s) for replacing Khomeini, the Islamic Republic's foreign policy remains unpredictable. The severe social, political, and economic problems that plague post-war Iran, coupled with Khomeini's death, have left the Islamic Republic open to internal criticism and vulnerable to a military or opposition coup. The elimination of their adversaries, the creation of greater antagonism between Iran and the West and the reinvigoration of fundamentalist values appear to be the clerics' only options in their pursuit of regaining power and control.

During the next few months, in an attempt to consolidate their power and control in Iran, the leading clerics in Iran, who have recently increased the number of executions of political prisoners, may expand the geographic range of their renewed interest in radicalism and fundamentalist values. The Iranian Government will likely continue to resort to surrogate individuals or groups for conducting worldwide terrorist acts. This would allow the Iranian Government to plausibly deny its

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